



# Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



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## Group News

There's a lot to pack into this issue of the Newsletter so I need to be brief. Two quick points for you to note:

First of all, please remember that there's no September lecture this year - so if you turn up in the Supper Room on the 11<sup>th</sup> you may find yourself doing yoga and tai-chi!

Secondly, Martin Railton tells me that the Apparch *Facebook* page now has 21 subscribers but that he hopes still more people may sign up. To visit the page just type [www.facebook.com/applebyarchaeology](http://www.facebook.com/applebyarchaeology) into your browser's address box. You can then view and add comments. If you click the "Like" button you'll also be kept informed about fresh additions.

Best wishes, *Martin Joyce*

## Finds Identification and Washing Workshop

One evening in July ten of us made our way to the Cocklakes office of Wardell Armstrong Archaeology where we were greeted by Martin Railton (wearing a tie) and his colleague, Theresa Gilmore, the Finds and Archives Officer at Wardell Armstrong Archaeology.

Those present had all taken part in field walking earlier in the year and the purpose of the evening was to look at the material that had been picked up and to try and identify it.

Teresa gave us an excellent overview of British Ceramics. There was opportunity to handle and examine pottery samples with ages ranging from the Bronze Age to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and to ask many questions. Each of us was given a comprehensive booklet which will be a very useful aid as we try to identify our finds in the future.

Then it was down to work. The bagful of sherds from the fields near Brackenber was shared out and, armed with toothbrushes and a bowl of water, we started to gently clean off the earth and debris, taking care not to immerse the pieces in the water. Yes, there were bits of stone and modern glass, which were discarded, but by far the majority of the finds were pottery. No very early pottery was identified but there were medieval pieces. These included

pieces of salt glazed ware and Cistercian ware. Salt glazed stoneware was imported from Germany from the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century and later copied in this country. The glaze gives the pot a pitted surface like orange peel. Cistercian ware was produced in the North Midlands in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and is recognised by its dark brown glaze. Most of the sherds were of later dates and were finer - many pieces being coloured and patterned. Most of us cleaned a variety of clay pipe stems and parts of the bowls. The shape, size and decoration of the bowls provide the best indication as to their date.

A few additional bits of flint were found. At the time of field walking any flints found had their exact position in the field recorded. All this information adds to our knowledge of human activity around Brackenber.



*Pot-washing at Wardell Armstrong Archaeology*

Martin and Theresa were thanked for providing us with the facilities and the opportunity to learn about the identification of sherds. We had all enjoyed the evening and there was no reluctance to take home another bag-full, this time finds from the fields walked under the guidance of Annie Hamilton Gidney back in March. Who knows what we may find.

*Phyllis Rouston*

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## NineKirks Walk : May 2012

May's evening walk was to Ninekirks near Brougham, a church extensively rebuilt by Anne Clifford in 1659 and altered very little since. We dressed for both the tropics and the arctic and set off across the fields past the site of the WW2 airfield, subsequently a prisoner of war camp.



*Springtime at Ninekirks*

Outside the church, we looked again at the field where we did the geophysics survey last year. At that time the top-soil (now recovering) had been washed away by a flood so conditions were not good for sticking probes in the ground. The geophysics did confirm the location of crop-marks in the field though.

The churchyard was looking particularly attractive with a diverse range of late spring flowers present. We saw the stables in the corner of the churchyard and the war memorial. Inside the church, we looked at the hatchments and memorials, noting that some of the brasses set into the floor embellish the family pedigree somewhat. One of the trapdoors was unlocked so we took the opportunity to study what may be Gilbert de Broham's grave slab from 1230. We could just make out the cross and sword markings by shining a torch across it at a narrow angle.

Finally we set off back to the carpark and bravely undertook the challenge of driving out of it and onto the A66.

**Tony Greenwood**

### An Evening stroll in Mallerstang - June

**2012**

This walk was planned mainly to examine the prehistoric enclosure on the north end of Birkett Knott, newly discovered by Annie Hamilton-Gibney. It was reported in the CWAAS Newsletter No. 68 for Autumn 2011.

The feature encloses the high north end of the ridge which is traversed by several steeply-dipping north-south out-

crops of the Great Scar and Ashfell limestones. The banks are mainly constructed from sandstone boulders collected from the glacial till that covers much of the top and west side of the ridge. These defences are substantially higher at the SE end than the NW but are generally hard to trace, especially to the east. The two entrances on the south side are separated by a long narrow cobble bank with rubble mounds at each end, the whole protected to the south by three sink holes across the low, narrow neck of the ridge. A Neolithic date has been postulated for the enclosure, and comparisons drawn with other Lakeland sites, but the true age and use of the site will need to be verified by excavation. Several visitors remained sceptical, so this will clearly be a good next step.

From our vantage point overlooking Water Gate Bottom to the north we could also see three Bronze Age burial mounds on the low ground beside the river Eden. On the hillside opposite lay the strip lynchett cultivation terrace complexes associated with Lammerside Castle and Wharton Hall, together with a variety of ancient tracks and field boundaries. Below us lay the four or five rabbit warrens variously described in the literature as Giants Graves or Pillow Mounds, together with derelict limekilns and the widespread scars left by centuries of mineral exploration and exploitation using 'hushes' to wash out the crevices and mineralised faulting zones in the strata.

Our rendezvous-site by the road near the railway tunnel was also where the 'navvies' who built the Settle to Carlisle railway and excavated the tunnels had their huts. Some 8 or 10 of these originally lay beside a small tarn that was probably also the source of flooding water for the hushes on Birkett Knott. This has since been drained. The nearby mine entrance was not explored as we chose instead to examine a cairn of mostly sandstone boulders on top of a much wider and older grassed-over mound that received general approval as a probable burial site. This is not mentioned in the literature or shown on any maps but may merit a more detailed examination at some future date to add further depth to our knowledge of this highly strategic site.

Most of the group then visited Pendragon Castle and examined the various features listed in the Visitor Centre handout. But finally the ferocious midges won, and we left the ruins to the sheep. It was a relief that the weather remained fine for once, though there was a surprisingly cold wind on the ridge top. Few areas of Upper Eden are so richly packed with features in so small an area.

**Stephen Walker**

## Hornby Castle - July 2012

On July 7<sup>th</sup> five members of the group were delighted to set off for their visit to Hornby Castle. Emails had been exchanged the previous day contemplating the likelihood of the site being inaccessible due to flooding, but as we drove up to the castle, passing deer grazing in parkland designed by Capability Brown in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the sun came out! The visit was planned as a follow up to Erik Matthews talk last October.

Erik met us and, before going to the excavation site, he took us to look at the exterior of the medieval courtyard castle. This was largely rebuilt in the fifteenth century by William Conyers, 1st Baron Conyers, and then again in the 1760s by Robert Darcy, 4th Earl of Holderness. In the early 20th century the 11th Duke of Leeds sold the castle and its contents. The east wing was subsequently demolished in 1930 and stonework and other architectural fragments were sold. Hornby is now a family home.

As we viewed the castle Eric regaled us with the history of its occupants and their relationships with kings and government. He explained the need to demonstrate the extent of both wealth and power, an example of what was required being the 18<sup>th</sup> century banqueting hall which we visited next. This was a short walk from the castle. Guests at the castle would be entertained in the banqueting hall: eating, drinking and enjoying the gardens. Although it is now a ruin, we were able to appreciate how it would have appeared 300 years ago.

Erik first became involved in the project six years ago when he was asked to explore post-medieval remains on a



*The Banqueting Hall, Hornby Castle*

site centred on the banqueting hall. But numerous finds in the castle and grounds suggested much earlier occupation, and this led to further trenches being dug a short distance away and closer to the church.

The excavation-site at Hornby Hall was very different from sandy, windswept Brackenber, so familiar to the group. Here, three volunteers (one of them our own mem-

bership secretary, Carol), were hard at work in dark, dank, muddy woodland. Pottery sherds from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and food bones were frequent finds suggesting feasting but of greater interest was the discovery of a sophisticated medieval piped water system. A timber pipe carried fresh water to the site. A ceramic pipe parallel to it appeared to have been a drain as it showed signs that leakage had occurred. A link from the piped water system used the overflow to flush the drain. We were not able to view this in detail as covers were protecting it from the inclement weather.

Medieval floor surfaces associated with metal and glass artefacts were also evident. These finds support the idea that there was a structure of some sophistication on this site in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Nevilles and later the Conyers lived here. Such structures known as “pleasaunces” were associated with entertaining the inner social circle of the monarch. The investigation of this site is continuing.

Our visit concluded with a look at St. Mary's church, rebuilt on the site of an earlier Saxon church in around 1080. The tower was built in several stages and was further heightened in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. The adjacent village was destroyed at this time so that a clear view of the church with its substantial tower and, beyond it, the castle would greet visitors arriving at Hornby. This is a place of importance. One of the treasures in the church is a chantry chapel screen which incorporates Medieval paintings of birds and foliage.

We all enjoyed our visit. We could not have had a better guide and hopefully we expressed this to Erik before he left us to enjoy our picnic lunches sitting in the churchyard in warm sunshine!

### *Phyl Rouston*

The first event at Whitley Castle organised exclusively for the Friends of Epiacum was held recently and members of Appleby Archaeology were there to take part. The two

## Whitley Castle - Update on the “Friends of Epiacum”

hour walk around the environs of the fort was led by Stewart Ainsworth, President of the Friends. Stewart's express intention was to introduce the fort within the existing landscape rather than to treat it as a stand alone artefact. Those who had seen his contributions to Time Team would of course have expected nothing else.

Starting the walk in the remains of an Iron Age round-house, Stewart described the landscape as it existed before the arrival of the Roman Army. There would have been as many as six or seven settlements in this part of the valley of the South Tyne, each with its own field system. There

would have been cattle in pasture as well as fields of wheat, the climate then being more suited than it is now to arable farming. Linear earthworks defined ditched drove-roads connecting the settlements to the Gilderdale Burn. The fate of these pre-Roman settlements is of course not documented but it is likely that some would have been allowed to remain in order to help supply the garrison, whilst others, perhaps because they were a little too near the fort, would have been cleared.

We walked a short section of the Maiden Way and explored another of the settlements, this one containing earthworks which were probably medieval pillow mounds but which could also be Roman burial mounds. We crossed a hollow-way which had been the main road between Alston and Carlisle in pre-turnpike days. Layers of history superimposed upon each other were revealed - much of it having lain unrecognised until the investigations of the Miner-Farmer Project in the last few years.

One interesting factoid which was new to your reporter was that, after much speculation and little evidence over many years, apparent confirmation of Roman lead mining is (finally!) being uncovered a few miles from the fort.

For further information see [www.epiacumheritage.org](http://www.epiacumheritage.org)

#### **Richard Stevens**

Your correspondent recently took part in an evening visit by the West Cumbria Archaeological Society to view the 2012 excavations at Camp Hill, close to the vicus at Maryport. Jane Laskey, the curator at the Senhouse Museum, showed the group around the new area uncovered

#### **Camp Hill, Maryport**

this year following the opening up of a number of pits in 2011. These pits were originally excavated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and found to contain a number of Roman altars - anyone who has been to the museum will have seen this collection.

The principle theory at the time, and indeed until last year, was that the altars had been ritually buried by the military for any one of a number of unspecified reasons during the period of occupation of the fort. But the 2011 excavations revealed that the altars were in fact buried for rather more prosaic reasons - they were simply large pieces of stone found lying around that provided somebody with very useful packing materials for timber post holes. The posts, evidenced by an organic stain in the acidic soil at the base of one of the postholes, appear to have supported a large timber structure. There is now strong speculation that this may have been a post Roman early medieval building, especially so because other discoveries at the site this year included a number of early Christian burials, close to the timber building, which were similar to others elsewhere dating to 400-600AD. Some artefacts were recovered

from the graves, including a glass necklace, a tiny fragment of textile and a tooth, the last two of which may eventually provide some dating evidence

The other major find this year was a complete altar, the first to be excavated at Maryport since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the cause of much celebration amongst the excavating team.

So, just possibly a newly discovered very early Christian site in Cumbria - exciting stuff!

For further information see [www.ncl.ac.uk/press.office/press.release/item/dig-reveals-early-christian-cemetery-at-maryport](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/press.office/press.release/item/dig-reveals-early-christian-cemetery-at-maryport)

**Richard Stevens**

#### **Autumn Lecture Programme**

##### **Medieval drainage, sanitation and health**

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> Oct**  
(Please note that there is no lecture in September)

Don O 'Meara (WA Archaeology)

An environmental analysis of the medieval approach to drainage, sanitation and health

##### **Bronze Age cremated human remains from Brackenber - analysis and wider context**

**Tue 13<sup>th</sup> Nov**

Samantha Walsh (UCLAN)

##### **Epiacum, the latest developments at Whitley Castle**

**Tue 11<sup>th</sup> Dec**

Alastair Robertson (Local Historian)

The 'Miner-Farmer' project and moles,  
the archaeologist's little helpers



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